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It is of importance that an active and energetic effort should be made by those who sense the tragedy of the hour, and who would that a change be realized in the mentality and in the will of the multitudes.

The Assembly of the League of Nations is going to meet again in a few weeks. Others already, with a traditional prudence, have formulated suggestions for reforms—suggestions which have only a subordinate and superficial significance. It will be necessary to envisage decisive and profound transformations, which shall make of the League of Nations not a trust of nations, but a community of peoples.

We are hastening, therefore, to invite all those who understand that they have a sacred duty to accomplish not to hesitate, but to hasten in as large numbers as possible to attend the meetings to be held in Luxembourg on the eve of the second session of the International Parliament.

THE WORK OF THE INTER AMERICAN HIGH COMMISSION

By EDWIN L. HARDING

SINCE 1889 there have been several conferences of American States, their general object being the promotion of better relations between the countries of North, Central, Caribbean, and South America. These conferences went into many questions vitally affecting the relationships between the American Republics, and brought forth some concrete, constructive suggestions calculated to solve them. However, not much immediate good came from them, because there was no organized body to get behind their recommendations and see that they were carried out—they simply met, adopted resolutions, and adjourned—little was done toward carrying out their recommendations.

Prior to the outbreak of the great war the South American countries, and the United States, too, to a large extent, were greatly dependent upon Europe in financial, commercial, and transportation matters. Most of the trade of South America was with Europe; her loans were secured from European banks; and there was poor transportation service between South America and the United States. When the war came—with its dislocation of exchanges, stoppage of commerce, and withdrawal of ships from American services—financial and economic chaos confronted these countries. Something had to be done. Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo, with characteristic foresight, called the First Pan American Financial Conference to meet in Washington in May, 1915, to consider ways in which these countries could be made independent of Europe by the establishment of closer and more stable financial relations between them, and to consider how commerce might be stimulated by the securing of substantial uniformity in commercial law and practice. This conference met, studied the problems which faced the American nations, made recommendations for their prompt solution, and, having in mind the principal reason for the failure of previous Inter American conferences, recommended that there be established a continuing agency which would see that its recommendations were carried out. The

International High Commission (the name "International" was subsequently changed to "Inter American," since the Commission deals only with relations between the American countries, and it will be referred to hereafter as "Inter American") was accordingly created. This Commission is composed of not more than nine representatives from each country. The Minister of Finance (in the United States the Secretary of the Treasury) is *ex officio* chairman. The name given to each country's delegation is "National Section," which will be discussed in more detail later. All of these National Sections constitute the Inter American High Commission.

The program of the Inter American High Commission, as laid down by the First Pan American Financial Conference, embraces: (1) The establishment of a gold standard of value; (2) uniform (a) classification of merchandise, (b) customs regulations, (c) consular certificates and invoices, (d) port charges, (e) laws regarding bills of exchange, commercial paper, and bills of lading, (f) regulations for commercial travelers; (3) the international protection of trade-marks, patents, and copyrights; (4) the establishment of a uniform low rate of postage and the improvement of money-order and parcel-post facilities between the American countries; and (5) the extension of the process of arbitration for the adjustment of commercial disputes.

There is a bill before the Senate of the United States at present, which is a revision of the original act providing for the Inter American High Commission, placing the United States Section on a permanent legislative basis, which succinctly and comprehensively states the objects of the Commission, as follows:

SEC. 2. The United States Section shall co-operate with the other sections of the Inter American High Commission in bringing about between the Republics of North, Central, and South America, and the West Indies, a substantial uniformity in commercial law and practice, and in fiscal and administrative regulations, particularly as concerns bills of exchange, checks, commercial paper, and bills of lading; the classification of merchandise; commercial and vital statistics; customs regulations, consular documents, and port charges; regulations for commercial travelers; legislation concerning trade-marks, patents, and copyrights; rates of postage and charges for mail orders and parcel post; facilities of communication and transportation; the establishment of a standard of value and the stabilization of exchange; and the development of legal procedure for the arbitral settlement of commercial disputes. The United States Section shall not be concerned with the promotion of trade or with matters essentially diplomatic or political in character.

In the limited space at my disposal, it will be impossible for me to give details as to how the Inter American High Commission is carrying out these objects. Suffice it to say that in January, 1920, the Second Pan American Financial Conference met in Washington and it expressed itself as being well pleased with the work of the Inter American High Commission, and recommended its continuance.

It will be interesting to observe the organization and method of operation of the Commission. As I noted above, the Inter American High Commission is a body

composed of national sections. There is the National Section for Argentina; there is the National Section for Peru, and so on. The National Section of the United States is composed of the following nine eminent jurists and financiers:

HON. ANDREW WILLIAM MELLON, Secretary of the Treasury, Chairman.

HON. JOHN BASSETT MOORE, Columbia University, Vice-Chairman.

HON. JOHN H. FAHEY, former President of the United States Chamber of Commerce.

HON. DUNCAN U. FLETCHER, former President of the Southern Commercial Congress, and present United States Senator from Florida.

JOHN H. WIGMORE, Dean, Northwestern University Law School.

HERBERT FLEISHHACKER, President, Anglo and London-Paris National Bank, San Francisco, California.

HON. ANDREW J. PETERS, Mayor of Boston.

HON. PAUL M. WARBURG, formerly Vice-Governor of the Federal Reserve Board, and Chairman, Board of Directors, International Acceptance Bank, New York City.

SAMUEL UNTERMYER, of the New York bar.

DR. L. S. ROWE, Director of the Pan American Union, is the Secretary General.

DR. C. E. MCGUIRE is the Assistant Secretary General, and DR. G. A. SHERWELL is the Juristic Expert.

The National Sections meet at least once a year, most of the work being carried on by correspondence. It is worthy of note that these men receive no compensation, nor do they receive any reimbursement for traveling expenses, clerical hire, and other incidental expense to which they are subject by reason of their membership on the section. They realize the necessity of closer and better relations between the United States and the other American countries, and for the sake of securing these, they are willing to give their time and energy to the work.

The second unit through which the Inter American High Commission carries out its program is the Permanent Group Committee, composed of twelve men, who are bankers, economists, jurists, and merchants of distinction. The committees are charged with the study of the principal problems of an economic character arising in the respective countries to which they are assigned. There is in the United States one of these committees for each of the other republics of the Americas. So far the other countries have not appointed corresponding committees, but it is believed that they will shortly do so. These committees have no official character, being composed entirely of men outside of official life. They, too, serve without compensation or reimbursement for expenses, and their members are willing to contribute their time and effort in order that better relations may subsist between the American Republics. These committees rarely meet oftener than once a year, and their place of meeting is usually New York or Washington. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York has placed a committee-room at the disposal of the Commission, which it uses when the meetings are held in New York. However, for convenience, they are often held

elsewhere. Recently the Guatemalan Group Committee met in New York to hear a report by Mr. William Fisher, of San Francisco, California, a member of the committee, who had just returned from a four months' stay in Guatemala. This meeting was held in one of the committee-rooms of the Chemical National Bank, through the kindness of Mr. Frank K. Houston, its vice-president, who is a member of the Guatemalan Group Committee. The Ecuadorean Group Committee recently met in India House of the National Foreign Trade Council, New York City, one of its committee-rooms being secured through the courtesy of Mr. O. K. Davis, secretary of that organization and a member of the Ecuadorean Group Committee. The purpose of the meeting was to hear a report by Mr. A. F. Lindberg, assistant manager, Mercantile Bank of the Americas, and a member of the Nicaraguan Group Committee, who has just returned from a several months' stay in Central and South America. Mr. Lindberg made a special study of the development of the economic crisis in Ecuador, and he was able to give the members of the committee the benefit of his studies and observations. Meetings of this kind are held whenever occasion offers, and are a great help and inspiration to the members of the committees. The men composing the group committees are taking a very great interest in their work, and are devoting much time and study to it, thus making certain that the work of the group committees will more and more contribute to a better understanding between the Americas, and will do much to promote that closer financial and commercial relation which all thoughtful Americans desire to subsist between these countries.

Inasmuch as the members of the National Sections and Permanent Group Committees are situated in various parts of the country, it is necessary that there be some central body to direct and co-ordinate their work. The body which centralizes, co-ordinates, and directs the work of the Inter American High Commission is the Central Executive Council, whose duties are to keep the several National Sections in constant touch with one another, to carry out the conclusions of the various Financial Conferences, and to prepare the program, reports, and all other material necessary in connection with the various meetings of the committees, sections, and conferences. The Central Executive Council consists of the president, vice-president, and secretary general of the National Section of the country, which is the seat of the Central Executive Council. Washington, D. C., was, in 1916, designated as this seat until the next meeting.

Since the Inter American High Commission fills a distinct place, and performs services which cannot well or properly be performed by other agencies, since it seeks to solve the problems arising between the American nations through the medium of the best thought available in official and unofficial life, it is believed that it serves a purpose, and that it will in the future, as in the past, prove of value to our people, because of its timely and constructive work in bringing about closer and more stable financial relations and substantial uniformity of commercial law and practice between the American Republics.